

# ST. HELENS PARKS COMMISSION

Minutes for Meeting of February 9, 2015

Council Chambers, City Hall

## MEMBERS PRESENT

Jacob Woodruff, Vice Chair  
Phillip Roddy, Commissioner  
Stan Chiotti, Commissioner  
Howard Blumenthal, Commissioner  
John Brewington, Commissioner

## STAFF PRESENT

Neal Sheppeard, Public Works Supervisor  
Sheri Ingram, Secretary  
Jenny Dimso, RARE  
Thad Houk, Parks Supervisor

## MEMBERS ABSENT

## COUNCILORS IN ATTENDANCE

## GUESTS

Elisa Mann  
Steve Topaz  
Mary Jane Roddy

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## CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Woodruff at 4:00 p.m.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Blumenthal made a **motion** to approve the minutes of the December 15, 2014 meeting. Motion was seconded by Roddy and approved unanimously.

## TOPICS FROM THE FLOOR

## NEW BUSINESS

**Election of Officers:** Blumenthal nominated Woodruff for chair. Roddy seconded the nomination and it was approved unanimously. Roddy nominated Blumenthal for Vice Chair. Brewington seconded the nomination and it was approved unanimously.

**Vacancies:** Two of the Parks Commission applicants were at the meeting and were interviewed separately. Elisa Mann said she works at the library and spends a lot of time at the park, mostly at the dog park and on the trails. She just wants to give back because she spends so much time there. She has not been to all of the parks but tends to go to the ones with more walking trails. She would like to see more people use them and more brochures and posters about them at places advertising them.

Dimsho said Mann was helpful in filling out the Master Plan survey and passing out fliers for other people to fill it out. She thinks it would be useful to have someone at the library.

Steve Topaz said he has been involved with SHEDCO and a few other things to try to get the City to move forward. Cities that have parks where people can relax and meet other people seem to do better. He said one of the problems with St. Helens is we have no natural place or people to casually

meet each other. He thinks the Boise property should be made into a park until money is found to do something with it. It would be a free park and the gates would be open and there is plenty of free parking at one end. The City would then have a new park at basically no cost. The basic thing is to get more people on downtown St. Helens. More people do more buying. There is the opportunity to go after grants so they don't have to depend on the City for the money. He would like to see volunteers take care of the parks. Woodruff said we have a lot parks in the City already and finding volunteers for all of them is pretty tough. Topaz thinks there has to be a push on ways to get volunteerism in the City. That is something the City needs to work on. They could tap into the high school.

He would like to see what they call a walk down where they go to the head of a stream and walk down and pull all the garbage out. We need to come up with things like that and get people interested in the parks so they will help instead of paying higher taxes for the City to do it. Blumenthal asked if it would be a permanent park and Topaz said no, they could just call it a park for day and have a big party to clean it up and take some responsibility for their parks. It will take a different approach because the standard way of getting volunteers around here is a waste of time. Woodruff thinks a lot more people would volunteer if they had more time. Brewington said Nob Hill is all volunteer and Walnut Tree Park is maintained by the Kiwanis. Most of the ball fields have been built by volunteers and we have people who volunteer at Sand Island. We have a vibrant parks system for the size of St. Helens and we have a very understaffed Parks department who do the best they can with the labor and money they have to work with. He has wanted something to happen on the Boise site for years and he is not sure what it will eventually be turned into. Some of it may be a park. The ground down there is very hard. They tried to drive stakes for a carnival one time. There is not topsoil so it would be hard to plant grass or anything like that.

Topaz said it is good viewpoint for the river. It's not a traditional park. It is a place for the Pirate Festival and things like that where people have a commercial operation. It could be rented out for the weekend for festivals the way the property is now without any improvements. Chiotti asked if anything has come out from the City saying people can get involved with the property. Sheppard said that will come after everything is done with the ownership end of it. Chiotti said once it is, if they could advertise what it is and that it could use community support, it would be interesting to see what kind of response they get.

Woodruff asked Topaz if he were picked, would 4:00 meetings be a problem and he said no because he works and lives in town.

After Topaz left, Woodruff said he would like to talk to the third applicant, Jerry Belcher, who did not attend this meeting, before they make a decision.

**Bylaws:** Ingram passed out a new set of Bylaws with changes made by the City attorney. After looking them over, Chiotti made a **motion** to accept the Bylaws with the changes made. Motion was seconded by Roddy and approved unanimously.

**Exclusive Use Permit:** Girls Softball/SHHS turned in an Exclusive Use Permit for their upcoming season and there are no scheduling conflicts. Brewington made a **motion** to approve the permit. Motion was seconded by Chiotti and approved unanimously.

**Reimbursements:** Woodruff said Jeff from Girls Softball was at the last meeting and was asking about getting reimbursed for the work they do out at Campbell Park and using it for a percentage of credit towards their permit fees. They are planning on putting \$12,000 to \$13,000 into Campbell this year. He tried to tell him there are a lot of leagues that do work on the fields so if you do it for one, you have to do it for everybody. Dimsho said it was also triggered by the fee increase on the permits. Brewington said he understands the theory but he doesn't subscribe to it. Woodruff said

every organization does work but this is the first time anyone has asked to be reimbursed for it. Woodruff said if we do it for them, every other organization will be asking to do the same and we won't be getting any money at all for permit fees. Chiotti said the only thing he thought of was if they get rained out for a month or something and Woodruff said people can get reimbursed for that, can't they? Ingram said we have reimbursed people for rain-outs before. Brewington said he was president of the Oregon Softball Association for several years and was involved with putting on tournaments. The cost for play varies. In some areas, they charge more but they prepare the fields. They charge \$25 - \$30 per game because of that. They charge a lot more in Portland and it's still subsidized. Woodruff said they found out at every park outside of here, they are paying a lot more. Brewington said if you start heading down that slope, next the people at 13 Nights will want to get reimbursed for what they do for one example. Woodruff agreed and said if you do it for one group, you have to do it for all and it will snowball and that Parks wouldn't get anything. Basically they would get the park for free every year.

Blumenthal said if you really love a park, you give your time and effort to make it better. Woodruff said he coaches and after games they are raking the fields and making them look nice and if they don't have practice, they pull weeds. It is their responsibility to make it look nice and it's a sense of pride. Brewington said, in his mind, you can't go into a facility you didn't build and say it's not good enough and you don't want to pay the fee being charged. Chiotti said they want to put \$13,000 into the fields but they are not obligated to do so and shouldn't be reimbursed for it. Chiotti made a **motion** to recommend to Council not to give reimbursements for the work they do. Motion was seconded by Brewington and approved unanimously.

**Right-of-Way Work at Nob Hill:** Blumenthal said at one point, at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, there was a gentleman who tried to vacate the front of the park to become private. He had pictures he passed out. Since that happened and the Council gave him a small part of property up there, he has bulldozed a place to park. He was hoping that, in the future, there would be parking places and a place to back up and turn around. Sheppard said the guy came to the City and asked permission to do what he is doing at the end of the street right-of-way and the City gave him permission and approved what he wanted to do and Blumenthal doesn't agree with it. Blumenthal said there is a dirt berm there now and Sheppard said the berm was bigger before and the guy spent \$200 taking rubbish out of there. Blumenthal said in the area where people should back in to turn around where he is building a wall now, he is taking away flat area. Sheppard said there was never a way back in there before he did what he did there and there is plenty of room in there to turn around. He has put the fence up to make a safe place and make it public and is adamant about Sheppard putting up more signage to show that is for public use and that there is right-of-way in there.

Brewington asked if his concern was people parking on his property and Sheppard said no, he liked people parking down there. Blumenthal asked who was going to have to maintain that. Brewington asked if it was in the park and Sheppard said most of it is street right-of-way. Sheppard said Blumenthal thinks it is affecting the park but Nelson and Sheppard's opinions are that it doesn't affect the park now. The area wasn't for parking before and the turn-around area wasn't even there before. It was a berm that went up the hill. Blumenthal said they can look at it when they go to Nob Hill next month. If it had come to the Parks Commission, he would have suggested other more natural materials instead of the chain link fence at the end of the street. He is wondering if it goes with a nature park and if you create more public access at the end of the street, does that make it a park? Sheppard said it is in the right-of-way and people have to ask permission to do things in the right of way and whatever he puts there becomes City property. Brewington said he thinks it is out of the Parks Commission purview so he should take it up with the Public Works Director since he has the authority. Woodruff says he sees Blumenthal's concern but the guy has done everything right. If we are creating more parking for the park, that is a good thing.

**Disc Golf Parking:** The parking area off old Portland Road is almost a foot deep in muck and now people are pulling in the brush and areas where they shouldn't be to avoid it. Sheppard said he was going to gravel that but Morten and the City Engineer need to weigh in because it is such a high traffic area so they weren't sure it was a safe parking area. Hole #1 is right there so it is convenient and walkers park there for the trail too. Dimsho said we have the bridge project planned for this summer or next summer that will make it a short walk to get there from the parking lot. Chiotti thought we should just block it off and make them park in the parking lot. They shouldn't be backing out onto that road. Sheppard said if they are okay with making it a no parking area, he thinks it doesn't need to go through the Council. He will talk to Nelson about it. Everyone agreed it should be a no parking area.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Master Plan Update:** Dimsho had an estimated cost on the Veterans Memorial. It was a mix of donations and in-kind costs and \$23,000.00 was the estimate. An estimate for an expansion that would include more recent wars would be around \$28,000.00. That will be going in the Capital Improvement plan as a possible project.

The grant cycle that got us the bridge is coming around again and she had talked to Houk about possibly another covered shelter or something next time. Small grants have a cap of \$75,000.00 and we have to match 40% and that is pretty high so would like to stay in the \$50,000.00 range. Houk said a kit to put one together and pour concrete was about \$20,000.00 for the cheapest one. Dimsho said they might be more likely to get funding if they had a project that had to do with trails. Sheppard said we could look at rehabbing the stairs at Grey Cliffs Park. We have been getting a lot of complaints about it. He also suggested maybe rehabbing the tennis courts. The ground isn't stable so it needs to be dug out and done right. Dimsho said maybe we could put a 2-stall restroom at 6<sup>th</sup> Street field. Sheppard said there used to be one there and it was a brick building and he didn't know why it got taken down.

**Restroom & Pay Station Updates:** Houk had pictures of the completed restrooms. The solar panels charge the batteries which run the circulating pump. There are huge fans so they don't smell. There is a huge storage closet between the two restrooms. There is a hose with a pump for cleaning. We are going to be enhancing the lock system. We are going to use the old restroom for a storage shed for a mower.

Sheppard said there is still quite a bit of plumbing that needs to be done but the electricians are almost done with the pay stations. There was an issue with getting a phone line down there. The pedestals need to be moved further out.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Dimsho said we joined the Intertwine group that Blumenthal and Skinner had brought to their attention. Since we are a new member, they did publicity in their blog post about Nob Hill. Skinner put it together and it calls out the City and the Parks Dept. and thanks them for all their hard work and support. She wanted to share it because it is good press and people for the Portland area will read it and maybe come and check it out. It is more publicity for the nature walks and work parties. Blumenthal said the Native Plant Society is coming out on March 21<sup>st</sup> to look at the wildflowers and they have their regular work party on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Sheppard said Blumenthal should be commended for his work out there. He has given him a pile of gravel and Blumenthal has been putting it on the trails.

We will have a field trip to Nob Hill on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:00.

Sheppeard said it's time to start working on the budget and they need to budget for dock repairs. They are in dire need of repairs.

## **COUNCILOR'S REPORT**

## **OTHER MATTERS**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 20, 2015, at 4:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheri Ingram  
Secretary

2015 ATTENDANCE RECORD							
P = PRESENT / E = EXCUSED ABSENCE/U = UNEXCUSED ABSENCE							
Meeting Date	John Brewington	VACANT	Jacob Woodruff	VACANT	Stan Chiotti	Howard Blumenthal	Phillip Roddy
2/09	P		P		P	P	P